

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
**Office of the Administrator**  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



June 13, 2006

The Honorable **Alberto R. Gonzales**  
Attorney General of the United States  
Department of Justice  
Washington, DC 20530

REF: Executive Order 13392 – Improving Agency Disclosure of Information

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

In accordance with Executive Order 13392, "Improving Agency Disclosure of Information," NASA completed its review of its Agency's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process and developed an FOIA Improvement Plan (see Appendix A).

NASA has established FOIA Requester Service Centers at each of our Centers and components (see Appendix B), and appointed a FOIA Public Liaison Officer as the operating officer of these newly designated centers (see Appendix C).

NASA will continue to support the President's FOIA initiatives and work to improve public accessibility to Agency records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. D. Griffin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael D. Griffin  
Administrator

Enclosures (3)

cc:  
The Honorable **Rob Portman**  
Director, Office of Management and Budget

**Appendix A:**  
**FOIA IMPROVEMENT PLAN –**

A. Characterize overall nature of agency's FOIA operations:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) maintains a decentralized FOIA process, in which we operate and staff 13 FOIA Requester Service Centers at each of our NASA Centers or components. This approach enables NASA to reduce its FOIA request processing time and provide a quicker response to the public requesters.

B. List all areas selected for review:

- (1) The initial FOIA request process was reviewed against our published regulations set forth at 14 CFR Part 1206.
- (2) The current backlog status at each of our decentralized FOIA offices.
- (3) The number of requests received during the past three years.
- (4) Our agency's FOIA processes and practices used at each of our decentralized FOIA processing locations.
- (5) FOIA staffing at each location.
- (6) FOIA request volume by Center offices.
- (7) Our current public Web sites.

C. Include narrative statement summarizing results of review:

The results of our agency's FOIA review revealed that we have satisfied the requirements of Title 5 USC §552, but we have noted that some of our Center FOIA Requester Service Centers maintain a small backlog of cases. Further, during FY03 – FY04, we actually improved on our median dates, even though the public FOIA requests increased significantly after the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy. NASA's response to FOIA requests after the Columbia accident was particularly noteworthy. Following the accident, we established an internal process to ensure responsive records were provided and technical and legal reviews were conducted; this, coupled with immediately providing these documents in our electronic reading room, allowed the media and public to review these documents in days rather than months.

One of the lessons learned from the Columbia accident was that NASA needed to improve its FOIA process. As we endeavor to improve our disclosure of information to the public, we are developing this quick-response approach.

Our internal review showed the need to improve our computer hardware and software, such as:

- Procuring redaction software – to allow a quicker, more efficient means of redacting agency records.
- Individual desk scanners – to quicken the process to redact electronically and the ability to download document into our electronic reading room immediately upon completion of our initial release determination.

We also learned from our review that, out of our 13 FOIA Requester Service Centers, we had serious single-point failures at six locations. Not having an effective Center personnel back-up at those locations could create a serious backlog.

Finally, we discovered an important need to team build internally with our search teams within the program and legal offices. Their help and assistance are vital in reducing the backlog and response time to finalize the initial release determinations.

D. List all areas chosen as improvement areas for agency:

- (1) FOIA Staffing
- (2) Equipment / Logistics
- (3) Web Site Improvements
- (4) Agency Reference Handbook
- (5) FOIA Database
- (6) FOIA Training
- (7) Communications

E. For each improvement area provide:

- (1) Name: **FOIA Staffing**
- (2) Brief statement of goal sought: This improvement is based on several factors:
  - a) Eliminating single point failures at our NASA Centers.
  - b) Ensure that all FOIA positions are primary jobs.
  - c) Seek adequate administrative support for higher volume Center offices.
  - d) Standardize staff personnel series and grades.
- (3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken:
  - a) During the next several months, the agency's chief FOIA officer and chief FOIA public liaison officer will coordinate with the senior management at each NASA Center to ensure the identification of suitable employees that can be properly trained to serve as backups to our Centers' FOIA specialists.
  - b) During the above discussions at each Center, emphasis will be center around the importance of the assigned FOIA specialist's primary duties and functions. Any other duties must be secondary and must not hinder the FOIA process.
  - c) Seek an administrative support specialist to assist the Headquarters office in the daily processing of FOIA requests.
  - d) Discuss human resources at the agency level to standardized position description for agency FOIA personnel, including the development of a GS-7/9/11 information release specialist and a GS-12/13 senior information release specialist, in a standardized series.
- (4) Time milestones: These actions are expected to be completed in FY07. We will conduct an evaluation quarterly between now and FY08 on our improvement in this area.

- (5) Means of measurement of success: Overall success in this area will be based solely on the elimination of all single point failures at each of our 13 FOIA Requester Service Center locations and standardizing grades and series of our assigned FOIA staff, as stated above. We expect to achieve success once we have eliminated FOIA as a secondary **function** to other duties assigned.

- 1) Name: **Equipment/Logistics**

- 2) Brief statement of goal sought: Redaction **software** should be procured for each Center FOIA Requester Service Center and dedicated scanning **support/equipment** should be acquired for each Center office.
- 3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken: Each Center FOIA public liaison officer will budget for these items with either year-end funds (if available) or as part of the FY07 budget.
- 4) Time milestones: First milestone will be September 30,2006, to ascertain which of our 13 FOIA Requester Service Centers have received both hardware and software. Second and Final Milestone will be First Quarter, FY07, in which all FOIA processing offices should have received both items.
- 5) Means of measurement of success: 100 percent of the FOIA Requester Service Centers have both desktop scanners and redaction software for implementation.

- 1) Name: **Web Site Improvements**

- 2) Brief statement of goal sought: Redeveloping NASA's FOIA Web page to enhance the public's knowledge of our FOIA process. Redesign all subordinate FOIA web pages to incorporate the 'portal' design. Finally, consolidate the NASA Electronic Reading Room **from** 13 sites into one.
- 3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken: Work with NASA Internet Services to development and design of the 'portal' look and feel among all subordinate FOIA sites.
- 4) Time milestones: Initial milestone is projected to be no later than 90 days from the end of FY06 to meet the expected completion date of September 30,2006.
- 5) Means of measurement of success: 100 percent of the NASA Center Web pages updated with current information and having the 'portal' look and feel.

- 1) Name: **Agency FOIA Reference Handbook**

- 2) Brief statement of goal sought: It has been over two years since the last update to our agency's FOIA Reference Handbook. The goal is to revise and update all agency information pertaining to its FOIA process including any changes or updates directly related to Executive Order (EO) 13392. Download this handbook directly to our FOIA Web page.
- 3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken: During the revision process, an **ad hoc** group of agency FOIA staff will conduct a page-by-page review, updating changes since the last revision, deleting outdated information, and adding the newly adapted changes in accordance with EO 13392.
- 4) Time milestones: No later than September 30,2006.
- 5) Means of measurement of success: Updated, printed, and posted onto our agency's FOIA Web page.

- 1) Name: **FOIA Database**
- 2) Brief statement of goal sought: Replace current **FileMaker Pro** database with an established commercial-based system which will allow the public to access and track the current status of its FOIA request.
- 3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken: Interview vendors and evaluate their FOIA database systems for procurement.
- 4) Time milestones: Initial milestone - No later than September 30,2006, for the review and decision of which commercial package to procure; have the new system up and operational no later than September 30,2007, for implementation for FY08.
- 5) Means of measurement of success: Procuring the commercial program and having it available for use by FY08.

- 1) Name: **FOIA Training**
- 2) Brief statement of goal sought: **Implement** an annual mandatory FOIA training program to be held in conjunction with the annual NASA FOIA Conference for all assigned FOIA information release specialists and their designated backups.
- 3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken: Budget travel and training dollars at each of our Centers dedicated for annual FOIA training at American Society of Access Professionals Annual Western Regional FOIA Training Conference and an annual agency FOIA Conference.
- 4) Time milestones: Annually during the budget process.
- 5) Means of measurement of success: 100 percent participation.

- 1) Name: **Communications**
- 2) Brief statement of goal sought: Establish a toll free phone number for use by the public to contact the agency's FOIA Requester Service Center.
- 3) List of all distinct steps planned to be taken: Coordinate with the agency communications team to establish a toll free line and install in the agency's FOIA Requester Service Center. Post this information on NASA FOIA's Web page for public dissemination.
- 4) Time milestones: No later than June 14,2006.
- 5) Means of measurement of success: 100 percent operational by the above date.

F. For the entire plan, group the improvement areas into the following time periods:

- 1) Areas anticipated to be completed by December 31,2006:
  - a. Equipment/Logistics
  - b. Agency FOIA Handbook
  - c. FOIA Training
  - d. Communications
- 2) Areas anticipated to be completed by December 31,2007:
  - a. FOIA Staffing
- 3) Areas anticipated to be completed after December 31,2007:
  - a. FOIA Database

**Appendix B:**  
**NASA FOIA Requester Service Center Addresses**

NASA, FOIA Requester Service Center, Attention: Chief, FOIA Public Liaison Officer,  
Mail Stop 9P39, 300 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20546

NASA Ames Research Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Mail Stop 943-4, Moffett Field,  
CA 94035

NASA Dryden Flight Research Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Post Office Box 273,  
Edwards, CA 93523

NASA Glenn Research Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, 21000 Brookpark Road,  
Cleveland, OH 44135

NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Greenbelt, MD 20771

NASA Headquarters, FOIA Requester Service Center, Mail Stop 5-K39, 300 E Street, SW,  
Washington, DC 20546

NASA Office of the Inspector General, FOIA Requester Service Center, Mail Stop 8-V79,  
300 E Street, SW, Washington, DC 20546

NASA Management Office – Jet Propulsion Laboratory, FOIA Requester Service Center,  
4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena, CA 91109

NASA Johnson Space Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Houston, TX 77058

NASA Kennedy Space Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Kennedy Space Center, FL  
32899

NASA Langley Research Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Hampton, VA 23681

NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Huntsville, AL 35812

NASA Stennis Space Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Stennis Space Center, MS 39529

NASA Shared Services Center, FOIA Requester Service Center, Bldg 5100, Stennis Space  
Center, MS 39529

Appendix C:  
NASA FOIA Public Liaison Officers and Service Center Contact Numbers

NASA

Stephen **McConnell**, Chief, FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
Judi Hollingsworth, Deputy Chief, FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(877) NAS-FOIA / (202) 358-FOIA

Ames Research Center  
Kelly Garcia  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(650) 604-3273

**Dryden** Space Flight Center  
Kim Lewis  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(661) 276-2704

Glenn Research Center  
Angela Pierce  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(216) 433-2813

Goddard Space Flight Center  
Joan Belt  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(301) 286-4721

NASA Headquarters  
Kellie Robinson  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(202) 358-2265

Office of the Inspector General  
**Frank LaRocca**  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(202) 358-2582

Jet Propulsion Laboratory  
Dennis **Mahon**  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(818) 393-6779

Johnson Space Center  
Stella Luna  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(281) 483-8612

Kennedy Space Center  
Penny Myers  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(321) 867-9280

Langley Research Center  
Cheryl Cleghom  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(757) 864-2497

Marshall Space Flight Center  
Judi Hollingsworth  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(256) 544-1837

Stennis Space Center  
Joy Smith  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(228) 688-2118

NASA Shared Services Center  
Koby South  
FOIA Public Liaison Officer  
(228) 813-6012